A STUDY OF SOCIAL AUDIT OF 'MGNREGA' AS A TOOL TO PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNANCE: SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PARBHANI DISTRICT (MH)

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RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed PhD research aims to investigate the role of social audits in promoting Good Governance within the context of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), with a specific focus on Parbhani District of Maharashtra.

MGNREGA is one of the largest work guarantee programmes in the world launched in 2005 by the Ministry of Rural development. It is a landmark social welfare program, seeks to provide livelihood security and promote sustainable development in rural areas. The primary objective of the scheme is to guarantee 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work. It provide legal right to work, so it is right based framework for social empowerment. Also it follows decentralised planning (The act mandates Gram sabhas to recommend the works that are to be undertaken and at least 50% of the works must be executed by them). It also helps in creating durable assets (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells) in rural area. Therefore this act is landmark development in our democratic setup for sustainable development. Section 17 of the MGNREGA has mandated Social audit of all Works executed under the MGNREGA.

Social Audit is different from Financial Audit. Financial audits involve inspecting and assessing documents related to financial transactions in an organization to provide a true picture of its profits, losses and financial stability. Social audits focus on the performance of a programme in fulfilling its intended social objectives and ethical vision through consultation with a range of stakeholders including social programme beneficiaries, community members, government officials and verifying the information obtained with documents and physical evidence. It ensure Substantial Accountability over procedural accountability.

Social Audit is the critical assessment of government programmes and activities by the community with active involvement of the primary stakeholders. The people in coordination with local administration conduct social audit. It includes audit of the quality of work being executed at different levels along with the details of disbursements made, the number of labourers employed and materials used. Therefore social auditing creates an impact upon governance. It values the voice of stakeholders, including marginalised sections of the society whose voices are rarely heard. It informs and educates people about their rights and entitlements. Also provides a collective platform for people to ask queries, express their needs and grievances. It promotes people's participation in all stages of implementation of programmes. It brings about transparency and accountability in government schemes. So it strengthens decentralised governance.

Governance is a value neutral term which is about the manner in which authority is exercised in administration of countries socio-economic resources. Whereas Good governance is value laden concept. It is about serving the citizens and being responsive to their problems by providing solutions and ensuring satisfaction. In the 1992 report entitled "Governance and Development", the World Bank set out 8 major characteristics of Good Governance. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. So here Social Audit can be handy tool to achieve the good governance at local level.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

i. To discuss the various facets of Social Audit and Good Governance.

ii. To Understand how Social Auditing is major tool to achieve Good Governance at local level.

iii. To examine the existing framework for Social Audit of MGNREGA in Parbhani District.

iv. To assess the effectiveness and impact of Social Audits to fulfill 8 major characteristics of Good Governance : participatory, consensus-oriented,

accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

v. To identify challenges and barriers faced in conducting social audit of MGNREGA and utilizing their outcomes for better Good Governance at ground level.

vi. To Suggest required measures to strengthen Social Auditing. Study the best practices available elsewhere like Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act 2017. (Meghalaya is the first State in the country to pass a social audit legislation).

3. HYPOTHESIS

i. Social Auditing is a major tool for achieving Good Governance.

ii. Social Audit leads to proper implementation of MGNREGA.

iii. Social Audit leads to empowerment of beneficiaries at local level.

iv. The educated citizens are more aware about social audit and there is low level of awareness among uneducated citizens.

v. MGNREGA programme is proving to be successful.

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The research will employ both primary and secondary data. Primary Data will be collected through interview, obsevations and questionnaire from various stakeholders like government officials, beneficiaries, community members, and civil society organizations.

Secondary data will be collected from websites, online portals, books, journals, research articles and reports of various organisations.

5. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

Geographically the research is focused on the Parbhani District in Maharashtra, allowing for a concentrated and in-depth analysis specific to this region.

Although Parbhani is the primary focus, the research might also involve comparative data or insights from other districts or states to highlight unique challenges or successes at local levels in Parbhani.

The scope, thus, ensures a holistic understanding of the interplay between MGNREGA, good governance, and the role of social audits within the specific context of Parbhani. This targeted approach can serve as a model for similar studies in other regions or for other schemes.

6. SIGNIFICANCE

This study holds significant academic and practical value as it contributes to the existing literature on good governance, social auditing, and rural development. The findings will help policymakers, government agencies, and civil society organizations to understand the dynamics of using Social Audit as a mechanism to ensure transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in MGNREGA projects. The study's outcomes can potentially guide the refinement of policies and practices to enhance the effectiveness of MGNREGA implementation and promote good governance in Parbhani District.

7. TENTATIVE SCHEME OF CHAPTERISATION

1. INTRODUCTION

2. SOCIAL AUDIT OF MGNREGA AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

3. IMPLEMENTATION IN PARBHANI DISTRICT

4. DATA INTERPRETATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

5. CONCLUSIONS, FINDINGS AND SUGGESTION

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